

83rd Legislative Session Priorities
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

1. Maintain Base Funding and Minimize Additional Cuts

2. Engineering Special Item (\$5 million for biennium)
(Restores \$1.15 million and adds \$1 million to current funding)

This request will allow Texas A&M-Corpus Christi to continue the development of its mechanical engineering (ME) bachelor's degree, STEM pipeline initiative (South Texas Engineering Alliance) and industry collaborations as well as plan for implementation of additional engineering programs. A&M-Corpus Christi initiated a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering in fall 2009, predicting an enrollment of 122 by the fifth year of the program. As of fall 2012, the enrollment was 227. Two students graduated in May 2012 and one in August 2012, just three years after program implementation, triggering the process to attain ABET accreditation. The ME program also helped leverage new areas of research, including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVS), remotely operated underwater vehicles (ROVS), and cold plasma. The Coastal Bend is experiencing industrial growth and industry partners are requesting establishment of additional programs to serve their needs, including industrial, electrical and civil engineering. Thus, the continued development of mechanical engineering and the expansion of the engineering programs are vital components for the economic development of the area.

3. Life Science Research Building (\$75 million) (105,000 Gross Square Feet & 65,000 Net Assignable Square Feet)

The university has a current space deficit of 231,008 square feet or 24 percent. However, this deficit is based on current enrollment and does not account for enrollment growth between 2011 and 2016, likely the earliest any new building could be completed if a Tuition Revenue Bond is awarded by the 83rd Legislature.

Life sciences research is a strategic priority for the university and a Life Sciences Research Building is the first priority on our master plan. Life sciences research presently accounts for about two-thirds of our \$16.24 million in research expenditures, and we have the opportunity to increase it through our expertise in the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies, the Center for Coastal Studies and the College of Science and Engineering. However, appropriate facilities are needed to make the university more competitive in attracting external research funding, outstanding faculty and outstanding graduate and undergraduate students. Existing space has been renovated and repurposed to the extent possible, including enclosing and converting a loading dock to a research lab. A Life Sciences Research Building would not only allow the university to increase its capacity for obtaining research funding, but also to provide the types of engaging educational experiences to undergraduate and graduate students, including our Hispanic students, that lead to successful careers in the sciences.

4. Student Success Initiative (\$11.6 million for biennium)

This special item would allow A&M-Corpus Christi to meet the challenge of graduating more students in a timely manner. Our four-year graduation rate has risen steadily (from 14.3 percent for the 1995 cohort to 23.3 percent for the 2006 cohort) and is highest among institutions with Hispanic enrollment greater than 26 percent. Although we have improved, it is imperative that we do even better, which will require an investment in the success of our students. That investment will increase the educational level of the local workforce and help drive economic improvements in a region with high poverty rates.

We have identified the best practices that will help students -- especially those who are first generation, arrive underprepared or have financial challenges -- stay motivated and succeed. The university continually looks for ways to scale up successful initiatives efficiently, but the most successful strategies continue to be both time and labor intensive. The first element of a success initiative is setting the expectation that students will accumulate 30 hours each year and graduate in four years. Others include bridge programs for at-risk students, required orientation programs, early warning systems to identify students experiencing difficulty, intrusive academic advising, reasonable student-faculty ratios, academic support services, opportunities such as undergraduate research and internships, and financial support through scholarships, work-study, grants and loans.

(over)

5. Arts & Media Building (\$51 million – includes \$1 million gift) (85,000 Gross Square Feet & 55,000 Net Assignable Square Feet)

An Arts & Media Building is the university's second building priority. The current facility, occupied in 1978, houses the departments of music and art and part of theatre. Issues include lack of space for rapidly growing programs; sound transmission between rooms, which is a major problem for the music and theatre programs; lack of a theatre with fly space, wings and backstage areas as well as costume loft and set workshop; ventilation issues, which are of great concern for the art program, but affect the entire building; temperature and humidity control issues that are not only uncomfortable for occupants, but also causing instruments to warp and deteriorate; and lack of storage space for disciplines with a higher need than is ordinarily the case. The programs have grown in enrollment far beyond the capacity of the building. In the three programs still occupying the building, enrollment has grown from 176 to 430, or 144 percent. Faculty and students have been resourceful in coping with the restrictions, but sustaining the level of excellence the programs are known for is becoming increasingly difficult without adequate and appropriate space. Also, a School of Arts, Media and Communication launched in August 2012 that brings together administratively the music, art and theatre programs with the media and communication programs. Faculty have designed new programs and initiatives in communication and media that address 21st Century needs, utilizing highly marketable skills. Designing a space for the school will support the growth in existing areas and allow these new initiatives to flourish.